1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

[The City Greek]

Athenians know more about the French Riviera than the rural regions of their own country, and others of them live so entirely in an urban world that they take the Greek villager for granted, which in many ways is worse than ignoring him.[9] Yet such city Greeks, once this attitude is pointed out to them, are the first to admit their ignorance and to start another discussion on the novel subject of the Greek village, from which so many of them derive.

But there are somber shades as well to the sparkle and dash of Greek wit. To persuade many of the Greek officials to move from talk to action would have its difficulties and would prove particularly frustrating to an American or Britisher who had a special job to complete in a given period of time. It is also probably true that, given the present state of the Greek economy, almost any official is more interested in holding his job than in pressing toward real accomplishment if this might antagonize those above or below him in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Some of these officials, native sons of the village and not yet sure of themselves in the urban environment, spend disproportionate amounts of time in mending their political fences or in sitting on them, a pose easy for many Greeks to assume while rationalizing their problems away.

The qualities of city Greeks which have been mentioned here — self-confidence, intellectual curiosity, philosophizing a problem away, preoccupation with maintaining and improving one's position, and an awareness of a great cultural tradition — are endearing to some while irritating to others.[10] The urban Greeks who seem best to embody the heritage from the past and to approach with sincerity their problems of today are those who have taken time to know both the city and village Greece of the 1960's. Sharing the difficulties faced by their neighbors in the city, they also understand the grave readjustments occurring in the countryside.

The Island and Seafaring Greeks

The tradition of the city, ancient but still tremendously significant today, has mingled with the equally ancient traditions of the sea in the formation of modern Greece. Odysseus still lives in the Aegean and Ionian Islands today, not only in the resourcefulness with which he approached his problems but in the extent of his voyages. The seafarers are primarily the islanders, and Greece has many islands.[11] Although the sea, never more than eighty-odd miles distant from any point in Greece, has an indirect influence on the horizons of all Greeks, it is the direct source of livelihood to many islanders. Whether as fishermen or merchant seamen, they must study its moods in the same way that the city merchant studies the market or the peasant the condition of the soil. The seamen become so cosmopolitan through their voyages that they feel at home in many port towns with people speaking many languages. This at-homeness in the world extends to

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

take anything else with him, he took off his cloak and filled it with straw. As he hurried away in his rush and fright the straw bit by bit fell on the road and became stars. When he got to his house his robe was empty and behind him followed the monks. Since then we call these stars the priest's straw.

Rain. When summer has come to an end and fall is there we pick our grapes and harvest our maize and are waiting for God to send rain so that we can sow our wheat. The first rains start in mid-October. . . . They start either with a slow modest rain or sometimes with a strong one. The strong rain starts abruptly and all hell lets loose. The sky meets with the earth. Lightning, thunder, wind, hell. We all run with our hoes to hold the water back from entering our homes; others run to pull their animals out of ravines so that the water does not carry them away. Others gather the things that have remained outside, and others shelter themselves in their homes and gaze at the storm from their windows. When the weather turns good again it is the joy of God. Then we get ready our agricultural equipment for the field; it is time to sow. Rain is our life. Without it nothing grows; we are lost. But the rain can also do harm. When it rains suddenly the rivers come down with a rush carrying things and destroying our fields. It carries many rocks and stones onto the plain; when it rains and blows, it's hell. It throws down the wheat and it does a lot of damage. A good rain is a slow one. . . .

But nature is more than a collection of stars or plants or animals. It represents the forces against which man must contend as he seeks to wrest his living from the soil; nature brings disasters to which man must adjust even though he does not completely reconcile himself to his misfortune.

One type of catastrophe that visits Greece at frequent intervals is the earthquake, which comes usually in the late spring and summer. Wherever a person travels in Central Greece, Thessaly, or the Peloponnesos, he hears of the damage done by tremors. There is today an Old Corinth and a New Corinth, the latter being built after the old city was destroyed in 1858. New Corinth was once more destroyed in 1928 and rebuilt. In one village people still talk with sadness of a quake which occurred in 1875, killing forty-seven women and children inside the church. One of the most damaging earthquakes of recent memory was the August 1953 series of tremors in the Ionian Islands which destroyed so much of Cephalonia, Zante, and Ithaca. In April and May of 1954, more than thirty persons were killed in the quakes of Thessaly, three hundred injured, and thirty-two thousand made homeless.

Nature shows its unkindness in other ways. Sudden hailstorms, drought, and insect pests take their annual toll in many parts of Greece. While on a trip with the inspector of agriculture from Larissa, Thessaly, through some fields recently damaged by a storm, I asked him what the peasants thought of such a devastating rain. He said that they did not feel any enmity against the elements but do say in all seriousness to them "na se pare ho diavolos!" (may the devil take you!)

1:Sanders Z-5,N (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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1 Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

The Mountains

133 [311] The legend of the rainbow in the rock does not err in speaking of Greece as a rock. Only one fourth of her area is currently or potentially of any agricultural use and lies mostly in valleys or plains near the coast, at the foot of mountainous slopes. The remaining three fourths of the land consists largely of precipitous mountains, ranging up to a height in Mount Olympus of about 9600 feet.[1] "Beautiful," says the tourist. "Unproductive," says the economic planner.

The Pindus range, reaching its way south as an extension of the Dinaric Alps from Yugoslavia, is most marked in Epirus but nevertheless extends on into Central Greece. A spine of mountains comprises the central part of the Peloponnesos; even Athens is surrounded by gentle Parnes, Hymettus, and Pentele. In Northern Greece the Rhodope Massive cuts through part of Macedonia and Thrace, while Mount Olympus rises majestically out of the Thessalian plain. This means that the rugged topography is not confined to one part of Greece but that peaks can be seen from almost any place on the mainland. Many islands, including Euboea and Crete, have their heights around which legends as well as clouds have gathered.

[137] Since there are no forests on many of the mountains, the landscape has an almost naked look when seen for the first time. But a longer stay in Greece accustoms one to the browns and grays and lavenders in place of the greens often associated with tree-clad mountains. Frequently at dusk the mountains turn to a deep rose and purple that seems magically unreal.

[132] Where there are mountains there should be water to irrigate the fields below or turn the turbines of power projects. Heavy rains and snows do fall on the summits, but since Greece is only 171 miles across at its widest part (Epirus-Thessaly), and since the mountain divide cleaves the center, there is not much space in which rivers can find a gradual slope to the sea. They thus are short and swift, with a torrential character that poses great problems of flood, silt, erosion, and river control.

134 A village priest in Epirus described the erosion of soil by saying, half-seriously, that his fields grew rocks. When asked how this could be, he replied, "I went out and plowed my field, plowing around two rocks that stood only slightly above the ground. I put in my seed; the rains came. After the first rain I noticed that the rocks had grown farther above the soil; after the second rain they had grown even more. So I knew that my fields grew rocks rather than grain."

137 185 [311] [293] [175] Where there are mountains there should be forests. But before the war Greek forests covered only about 19 percent of the total area of the country. Once they were larger in extent. Constantine Nevros, in an article in *Soil Conservation*, holds the goat primarily responsible for the destruc-

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

The Plains

Peasants nowadays live in the plains more willingly than they do in the mountains. Good level land has a scarcity value. The most thorough study of this has been made by A. G. Ogilvie, who prepared a map of population density in Greece for the *Geographical Journal* of May–June 1945. He has identified fifty-nine districts which he regards as plains. These usually contain the regional and local capitals and are widely scattered among and around mountains, including in most cases the slopes facing them. They take up about 30 percent of the mainland, but contain about 52 percent of the nonurban population. Thus, one half of the rural population lives upon plains comprising less than one third of the mainland; but this also means that the remaining one half of the rural population lives in a completely mountainous environment.

In Greece the largest plain — that of Trikkala-Karditsa in Thessaly — is less than five hundred square miles in size, not much larger than many American counties. The roll call of the plains, which are alluvial, would list the major provincial towns, whose location is in part an answer to the need for marketing and transportation services of the villagers located in the surrounding fertile agricultural areas. Whether I was traveling in the Peloponnesos, in Epirus, or elsewhere, it was always a stirring sight to climb some range and find spread out on the other side a fruitful valley, along a river or in some old lake basin whose water drained off long ago.

When Greeks think of the plains, however, they think of the kind around Larissa, the chief city of Thessaly, which has rapidly become the center of mechanized agriculture, or they think of the plain of Thessalonike in Macedonia. These are the most important breadbaskets of Greece. Familiarity with these plains means also familiarity with the sun of Greece, which beats down mercilessly in the summertime. Here, a clump of trees or even a single tree is an oasis of shade for a rest after hours of working the sun-baked fields. Where there is not even one tree, the peasants rig up tentlike shelters for use at noonday or take refuge beneath a battered umbrella. During the agricultural season the plains literally teem with people — seldom are they ever out of sight or sound; but they do become more tired and listless as the day wears on. The peasant men in straw hats become tanned to the color of dark leather, as do many of the women in spite of their free-flowing headkerchiefs. The sun, nevertheless, works wonders with the crops, ripening the grain and bringing sweetness to the magnificent fruits of Greece.

If the plains make one conscious of the sun, they make one even more conscious of water — so much so that a tepid drink from a donkey-borne cask has a refreshing tang to it. On the plains there is usually too much

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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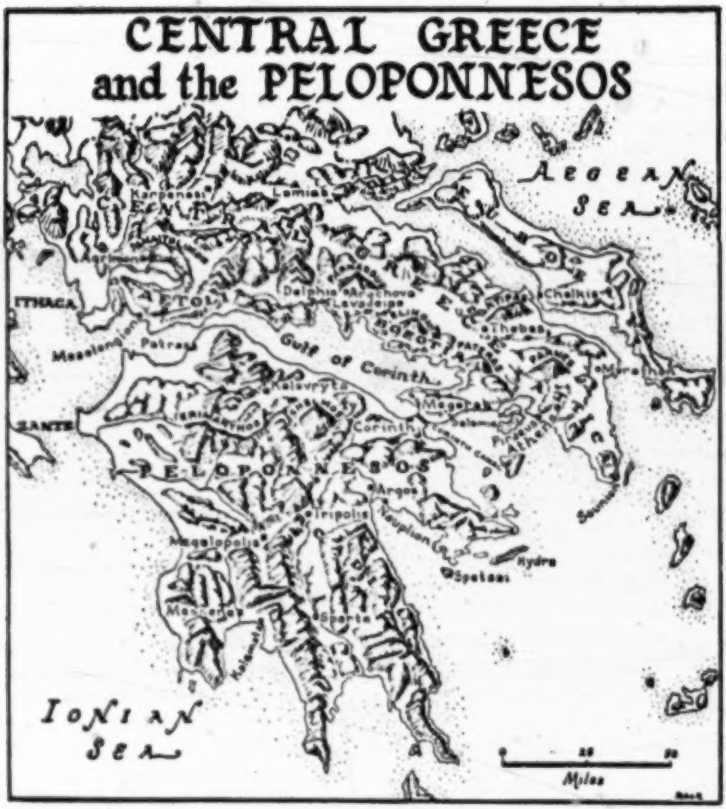

184 would have normally been paid to the mountain people, to Patras and sold it for its weight in gold. As a result, the highland villagers faced serious difficulties.

433 About this time a band of five young guerrillas came by the village and demanded hospitality. The villagers took them in and killed a lamb so that they could dine in plenty. After a few months, the same band put in another 511 appearance, but this time the people could only provide a cock for the dinner. 722 On the third visit, much later on, a wheat dish had to be the main course. Finally, on a fourth visit, when the members of the band were served only onions and garlic, they turned to the villagers and said: "You are hungry. Do you see those villages on the plain below? Why don't you go down there and take the food away from them, take their land, and let them come up here and live?"

An old villager answered: "Yes, we may be able to go down there and beat

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Transhumance in the Peloponnesos

We were on our way to Tripolis, the chief interior city of the Peloponnesos. Earlier we had crossed the Corinth Canal, had stopped for gas at Corinth, and gone on to Argos, perhaps the most ancient city of Greece. Oranges were ripe on the trees in the square around the cathedral, where buses pulled up to let their through passengers have a bite to eat. Turkeys and chickens tied by the leg to the top of the bus gobbled and squawked intermittently, but long ago had ceased to struggle for freedom. Leaving Argos, we had begun the long winding climb that eventually brought us to a mountain-top view of the blue Gulf of Argos and of the small port city of Nauplion across the way beneath a fortress-topped summit. As always in Greece, the shifting light gave a magic cast to the hills whose eroded sides revealed a rainbow of color, to the brown cultivated fields below, and to the brilliant iridescent water. Such landscapes, ethereal in quality, are the paths into another world, where the legendary universe of Homer seems to have flowed into the pastoral existence of Greek shepherd families today. Suddenly, that life teemed about us.

The sheep were rounding the same curve as we were, but in the opposite direction — hundreds of them pushing and shoving and terrified at the sight of a noisy, shiny automobile. We quickly pulled to the side and parked. The shepherds whistled and called, brandishing their long crooks until they finally got the huge flock of sheep and goats past us. Having encountered and met this emergency, the shepherds were ready for a cigarette and a short chat. They were from the village of Valtetsi, a few miles beyond Tripolis, up in the mountains, and were headed with their flocks and families for Kranidi, approximately twenty-five miles below Nauplion. We learned that they were following the practice geographers call *transhumance*,[5] or the moving of the herds, as the seasons change, from a summer to a winter pasture, particularly from mountain to lowland grazing. These were not nomads in an endless round of movement on schedule from one good grassland to another. These people from Valtetsi had left their village of solid stone houses, where they spend approximately half of the year, for a definite location along a coastal plain where they were to spend the other half of the year.[6]

The shepherds to whom we talked represented five families traveling together. Each family had from one hundred to one hundred fifty sheep, its major source of sustenance and income; women and children accompanied the men and animals as a whole family. The trip from Valtetsi to Kranidi took eight days of slow travel. On this trek and at its lowland site each family managed its own affairs, with the father in charge.[7] There was no cooperative arrangement of a chief shepherd which I was to find later on in a journey to Northern Greece — simply a movement of parents and

1:Sanders Z-5/1 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece
Vlachs EH15

covered with homemade blankets. The necessary water cask was also there. As we sat in front of the tent, we saw a scene of unusual beauty. The sun, setting in a red splash behind the Albanian mountains, was reflected in the Aoos River flowing in a small stream through its broad gravel bed; off to our right, the town of Konitsa spread like a jeweled fan up the hill. When we stood to warm ourselves at the fire, we saw a three-quarter moon rising behind the black mountain which towered just behind the tents, the moonlight on its patches of snow. The smoke of the campfire, the dogs barking, the puppies and lambs romping in the tent, the occasional neighing of the hobbled horses, made a scene that was distinct from the usual Greek evening landscape. It was incredibly different in time, too, from the atomic age, although in space only a score of miles from the Iron Curtain and twenty-eight flying hours from New York.

Berates' daughter, Vasilike, had been engaged for two years to a boy whom she had never seen but who was picked out for her by her father. As the father phrased it, "the word is given." At this point in the conversation, flustered and greatly embarrassed, Vasilike went into the neighboring tent to make some sirupy coffee. When we asked our host if his people had a dowry system, he grunted and said: "Ten years ago women took only their household equipment as a dowry; now they've started giving flocks as dowries. This accursed custom of the dowry has come up to us from the cities." Later, while we were sipping the coffee Vasilike brought, one of the shepherd boys came to play his flute for us. Because this was Saturday, the women two tents down the line had all washed their hair, with the exception of one little girl who was even then doing so in a small, shallow oven pan. The others had gotten to the stage of having their hair plaited. We could hear them at it, laughing and talking. But as the time dragged on, as darkness came down, and the sheep had not arrived, a nervousness became apparent in the camp. Everyone was marking time, waiting for the sheep.

At long last, the tension broke as we heard the flocks come nearer. They arrived at 9:30, and the available men, six in all, began the milking. A barricade of saddles, firewood, and thistles had already been made in which there was a small opening. The men seated themselves, three on a side, at the opening. The sheep were driven slowly up to the opening, and as a ewe came through one of the men would grab her by the hind leg and then proceed to milk her. Here, as elsewhere in Greece, the women never milked the sheep, nor the men the goats, although extra hands would have shortened considerably the tedious job that extended far into the night.

After the milking was well under way, Vasilike put a frying pan full of strained milk on the fire to boil. She then brought us a bowl of this warm, rich liquid to eat with bread and cheese. The bread had been purchased along the way and was paid for by cash from the milk sold en route. While

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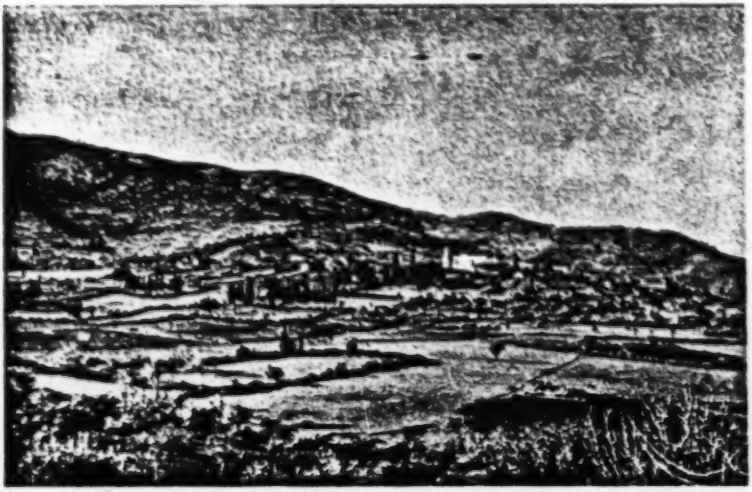

2. Kyparissia (Cypress Village) of Peloponnesos, amid its pattern of mountain, and field, and cypress trees that hide a cemetery.

3. The square of Metsovo, Epirus, village of the shepherd Koutso-Vlachs; the children quieted while a vivid funeral procession passed along this road.

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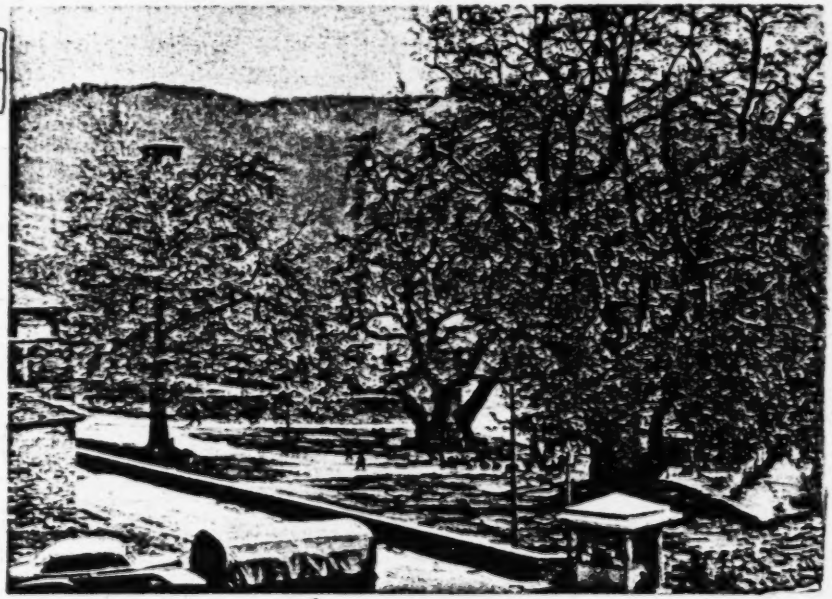

1:Sanders Z-5M (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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6. Plowing an olive grove near Lechonia, Thessaly. The olive harvest will draw a crowd of young people to the grove to rake or beat or gather as their foreman orders.

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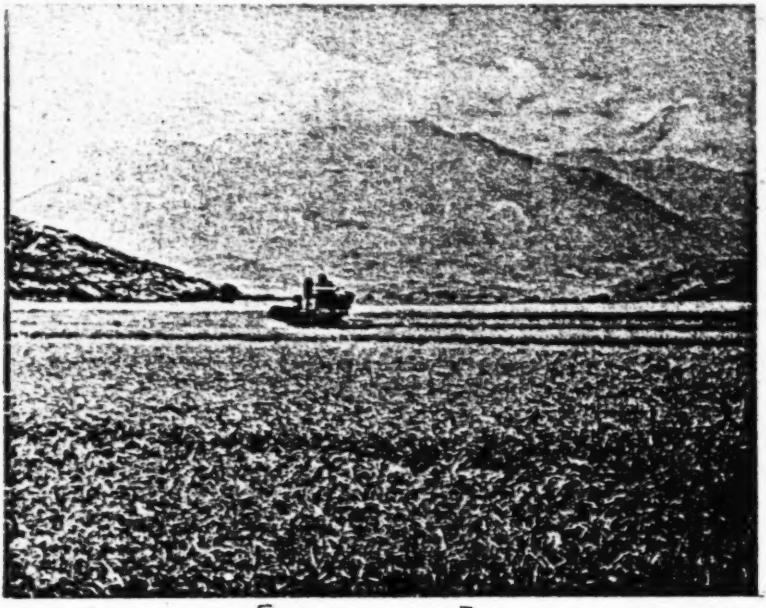
7. A wheat combine traces the plain of Thessaly, below Mount Parnassus.



[p. 272-D]

1:Sanders Z-5;4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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8. On the tenth day after transplanting, Macedonia; his hoe is said to be short-handled so that he can watch the fragile tobacco leaves as he moves.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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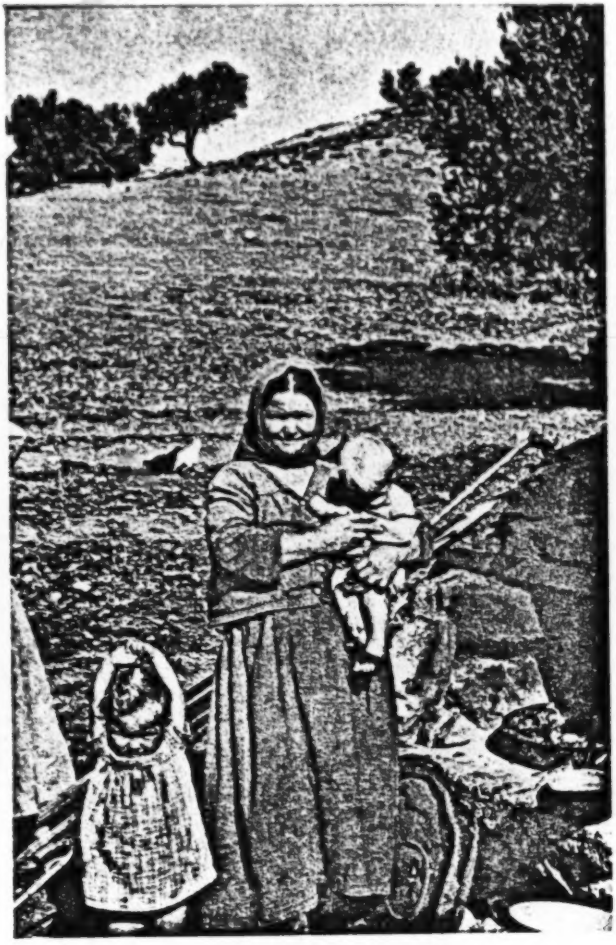

11. At the oven for Sunday afternoon lamb and rice, Attica.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

19. Porto Raphti, Attica, at the close of day.

[p. 272-L]

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Whereas the effect of the coming of the Asia Minor refugees was to increase the population and heighten the economic activity of the country, the effect of the stay of these northern villagers in town was to loosen somewhat the social cement that holds the kinship group and the village community together. It set in motion more perceptibly in Northern Greece what has long been characteristic of Central Greece and the Peloponnesos: the urbanization of the countryside, in the sense of the spreading influence of urban ways.

War is not the only source of cataclysmic change. Devastating earthquakes sometimes destroy densely populated areas. In 1953, shortly after we left Greece, earthquakes created havoc on the islands of Cephalonia and Zante. My former interpreter, Bessie Adossides, described this in a revealing letter:

As soon as these earthquakes started, Mother and I presented ourselves to the Greek Red Cross and volunteered to go either to Cephalonia or Zante. Thus on August 13th we left via Patras for Zante. Mother was heading a group of eighteen volunteer nurses and, when we arrived at our destination, the whole town was still in flames and the place smelled of burned flesh. The disaster in the town of Zante was complete; only one church, a school, and a bank were standing. The panic, suffering, and agony of the population were indescribable. We found on our arrival that nurses from Patras had set up a provisionary tent hospital, but as there was not sufficient place for all the wounded and sick, these were being shipped to Patras. For two nights we stayed awake as the fire came very near the hospital and we had to be ready to carry everybody on board a ship in the harbor. Luckily this did not happen.

Although this letter describes the efforts of a few individuals, the whole Greek nation was asked to contribute to the reconstruction of these destroyed island communities. International agencies also helped. Such a catastrophic experience, with its rupturing of some social bonds and the forging of new ones, has brought about social changes in the areas affected. The economic drain resulted in readjustment of the government's plans for economic development, since substantial material resources had to be routed to this area of dire need. A few years before, the city of Volos in Thessaly had been badly affected; earlier it had been Corinth.

No matter what type of cataclysm occurs, when governmental authorities have to step in and assist in reconstruction, there is always the tendency — as expressed by one nomarch — for people to take "distribution of clothing, food, and medical care for granted, hoping it will go on forever." The fact that they have suffered entitles them, so they think, to continued support even after reconstruction days are past.

Social Drift

Even in a country as subjected to catastrophe as Greece, individuals decide whether or not to try new ways which they have seen or about which

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

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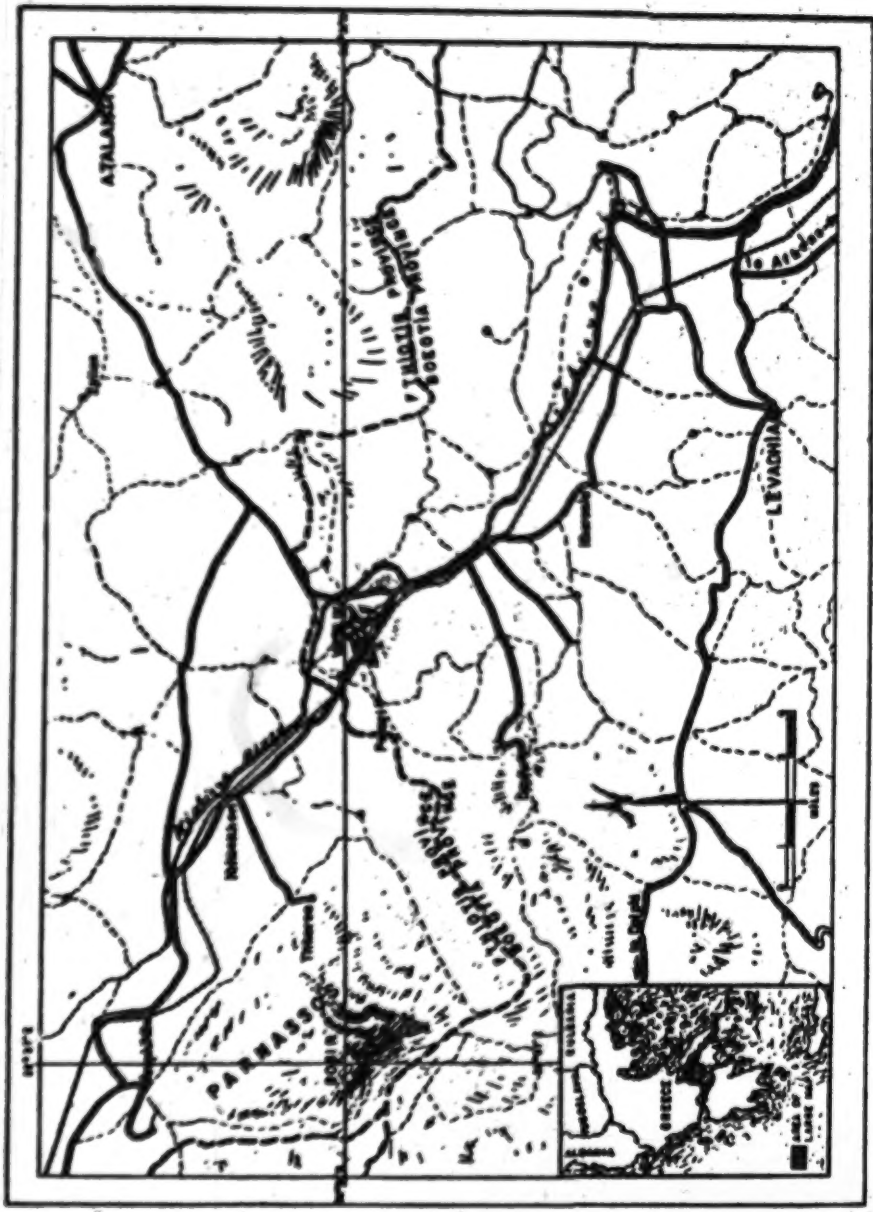

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2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

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Vasilika with Parori and Mt. Parnassos in the background

Women hoeing.

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2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

The Area Surrounding Vasilika

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The inhabitants of Vasilika, as the village will henceforth be called, are farmers and shepherds. The farmers cultivate the land in the plains adjacent to the low-lying ridge on which most of the houses are built. As a consequence of the dowry and inheritance system in the region, some of the fields near Vasilika are owned by farm families in neighboring villages, and the Vasilika farmers own some lands in other sections of the Boeotian plain and even in the surrounding foothills. By and large, however, the inhabitants cultivate lands of the

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quality characteristic of the Boeotian plains. These lie in East Central Greece, north and west of the smaller plains of Attica. The flat land of Boeotia is one of Greece's few regions of moist, fertile soil. The Kiphisus river once flowed through the whole area, but earth movements and the porous limestone of the region, which permits underground drainage, have broken the continuity of the river's flow. The upper stream flows through a narrow mountain-bordered valley and then into a wide plain which was once covered by Lake Copais. The river is silt-laden, and the underground channels through which the water escapes tend to get blocked up. The land can not always absorb the waters of the winter rainy season as rapidly as they accumulate. Thus an especially wet winter can flood the fields so badly that they do not drain off in time for spring planting

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(Newbigin 1949:333). A system of controlling the waters exists for the land reclaimed by draining Lake Copais. However, the cultivated fields of Vasilika lie some miles past this region, and although the Kiphisus flows through their fields, the farmers have no method of draining off excess water. Consequently,

[134]
they watch the winter rains with some apprehension. On the other hand, the regular winter flooding in ordinary years, along with the accumulation of alluvium enriched by humus, makes the soil suitable for two crops of wheat annually and for summer crops such as cotton and tobacco (Newbigin 1949:333).

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Since the growing season for these last two crops is a dry one, the cotton always requires irrigation and the tobacco sometimes does. The natural underground drainage system makes it possible to drill good wells almost anywhere in the fields, from which water may be drawn by diesel irrigation pumps. Many such wells have been dug and are serving Vasilika's farmers. Within the village itself there are nine wells in regular use. Only an unusually dry year brings any danger of serious water shortage for either ordinary household purposes or for

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irrigation. The mulberry trees which line the main village street and the occasional trees which appear here and there among the houses flourish because of the good water table and, in spring and summer, provide a pleasing contrast of dark green to the predominantly brown and orange tones of the village's land and houses.

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The people of Vasilika, like those on the other plains of Greece, not only have the advantage of larger tracts of more fertile soil but also are considerably less isolated than the inhabitants of the mountain villages. As will be seen,

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 1969 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

the easy access to roads and transportation to and from the village has important consequences for its culture and social structure.

The Boeotian plain is bounded by mountain systems and the sea. Running west and north, the Parnis, Kithaeron, and Helicon ranges as well as Parnassos itself separate it from the plains of Attica. The town of Lamia on the small Sperchios plain to the north and the west can be reached only by traversing parts of the Kallidromon and Ghiona mountains. To the east, an extension of the Kallidromon range makes access to the Gulf of Atalanti difficult. But the most important road which runs over and around the mountains and through the plains from Athens to Thessalonika has been paved throughout its length since World War II. It is now a two-lane asphalt highway which serves as a truck and bus route of major importance in the communications system of the country. In most of Boeotia, the highway runs more or less parallel with and not far from the tracks of the Athens-to-Thessalonika railroad.

The village of Vasilika lies on the slope of a low ridge just a half mile off this main highway. Since the summer of 1956, a local bus comes through the main street of the village twice a day, at 6:00 in the morning and at noon.

Going in the direction of Athens, ninety miles distant, the bus passes a British Petroleum (BP) station and restaurant a mile and a half down the road and traverses several villages. Its destination, however, is usually Levadhia, fifteen miles from Vasilika. Levadhia is the provincial capital and marketing center of some 12,000 population. Here bus connections to Athens may be made.

In the opposite direction, the nearest village of some size and importance is Kifisokhori. It lies five miles up the road from Vasilika. Kifisokhori has, among other facilities not available in Vasilika, flour mills, large grocery stores, barbers, doctors, a pharmacy, a movie, and several taxis. Whether they use the bus or load their horses with flour for the mill and walk by way of the shortcut through the fields, the people of Vasilika go most frequently to Kifisokhori.

Further north and off to the west, but only about eight miles past Kifisokhori, is Amphiklia. This town is the seat for tax collections and other governmental financial matters for the fiscal district in which Vasilika is situated. On the 16th of each month, for example, the priests of the village within Amphiklia's jurisdiction gather in the town to collect government salaries. Amphiklia also has a coeducational gymnasium (the approximate equivalent of an American high school and junior college combined). Several boys and girls from Vasilika live in that town to attend the school.

The people of Vasilika can also travel in the direction of the sea. The dirt road which starts at the highway leads to the houses of the village, then becomes the main street, and finally extends beyond the settlement between the borders of the fields and the foot of the ridge on which the village is situated. Never free of ruts, of dust, and in the winter, of mud, the road narrows and deteriorates further as it passes the last village house. Nevertheless, pedestrians, donkeys, horses, tractors, and even, with some difficulty, trucks and buses can get through. Half a mile past the last village house, at the banks of the Kiphisus, this road meets the road to Atalanti. Buses from Levadhia that have turned off

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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IV

THE ORGANIC BODY

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Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

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THERE is an old story, still to be heard in the mountain villages, which tells how God fashioned the dry land; how He put all the earth through the mesh of His sieve: here a pile of fine rich soil, the granary of Africa, and there another which was Sicily. When all was done there remained within the sieve a heap of stones and dross: God threw them over His shoulder, and there was Greece. *Tout ce païs*, remarks an old traveller, *est plein de hautes montagnes.*

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It is important to bear in mind the physical characteristics of the setting within which the Greek Church carries out her work of reconciliation and renewal. Greece is a land of high mountains and narrow coastal plains; of few towns and wretched communications. The majority of her people live, as they have lived from time immemorial, in small rural communities widely dispersed among the mountains, winning a laborious subsistence from the parched and stony soil which scarcely covers her rocky skeleton. More than half of the whole area of Greece is utterly barren; much of what remains consists of forest and poor pasture; less than one-fifth is under cultivation. Greece and poverty, the saying runs, have ever been sisters.

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At the time of the last census approximately one-seventh of the total population of Greece dwelt in the Athens-Piraeus region, the phenomenal growth of which during the last 100 years has set it strangely apart from the rest of the country—even though "the equipages of Athens", as the Abbé de St. Michon observed, "have not quite the freshness nor the elegance of those seen in the Champs Elysées". Salonica had a population which was approaching 300,000; the next largest town, however, was Patras with less than 80,000 inhabitants. Most of the remaining towns, a large proportion of which are situated in the fertile plains of Macedonia and Thrace, are market towns and centres of rural industries but little more.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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VII

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A THESSALIAN THEBAID

It seems a place of such stupendious solitude, as if the situation thereof had been designed for the retirement of Monks or the Cells of Anchorites.

PAUL RYCAUT

For the Quiet and innocency of their Life, the natural Beauty of the Place, the Rocks, Mountains, Streams, Woods, and curious Plants, joyn'd with the Harmonious Notes of Nightingales, and other Birds, in whole Quires, celebrating, and as it were, welcoming the forward Spring, to speak the truth, so charmed my melancholick Fancy for a time, that I had almost made a Resolution never to part with so great a Happiness, for whatever the rest of the World could present me with. But, in conclusion, it prov'd too hard a Task for me, so soon to wean myself from the World.

GEORGE WHELER
A Journey into Greece, 1682.

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THE traveller who follows the shallow streams of Peneios beyond Trikkala, with its Byzantine citadel, towards Kalambaka at the head of the Thessalian plain, will observe, long before the ruined cottages and hastily improvised dwellings of that oft-destroyed township come into view, a singular group of fantastically shaped rocks rising abruptly from the plain. As he draws nearer and the mountains close in on either hand he will distinguish what appear to be human habitations occupying seemingly inaccessible sites among these monstrous crags and pinnacles. Above Kalambaka itself the limestone cliffs tower toward heaven, "asperous, craggy, and barren"; a few monasteries and hermitages clinging as it seems miraculously to the very brink of the abyss, in defiance alike of the violence of the elements and of the laws of gravity. These are the Meteora monasteries, so extraordinary in their situation that one is disposed to accept the local belief that God formed

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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these strange rocks for the peculiar benefit of the communities of stylites who, in the fulness of time, were to build their chapels and hermitages upon their barren summits. Assuredly, there are few places on earth so admirably fitted to serve as a refuge for those who are called to the solitary life and to the labour of the angels as this rocky wilderness above Kalambaka.

The early history of the monasteries is lost in obscurity. We cannot say at what period the first solitaries found their way to this remote corner of Thessaly. It seems clear, however, that certainly before the end of the thirteenth century, and perhaps considerably earlier, there were many hermits scattered about this wild region. *Staghi* (as Kalambaka, the ancient Aeginion, was known in the Middle Ages), seems to be a contraction of *eis tous aghious*—the name is still preserved in the official title of the Metropolitan of Trikka and Staghi. It may have been many years before the unorganised eremitical life crystallised into anything in the nature of regular communities. Many of the monasteries trace their origins to the troubled epoch during the latter part of the fourteenth century when the Emperor of the Serbs carried on an intermittent campaign against the successors of Constantine from his base at Trikkala, a few miles further down the valley of the Peneios, and the desert of the solitaries was invaded by armed bands and by men whose warfare was not with principalities and powers. The hermits took refuge among the high rocks. How they first succeeded in establishing themselves on some of the apparently unscalable heights which are now surmounted by the crumbling ruins of their cells is one of the unfathomed mysteries of monastic history—though there are explanations to be heard in the mountain villages of Pindos.

Between 1356 and 1372 there came to Staghi a monk trained in the great coenobia of Mount Athos, Athanasius by name, who founded on the summit of the Platys Lithos—the vast mass of rock which towers to a height of more than 1,800 feet to the north of Kastraki—the monastery dedicated in honour of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour which has ever since been known as the Great Meteoron. As darkness descended upon the glories of New Rome, and the church of the Holy Wisdom—"the most fayr Chirche and the most noble of alle the world"—fell into the hands of the infidel, the desert blossomed and a flourishing group of monasteries sprang up among the barren rocks. The Great Meteoron prospered and served as a model for other foundations, thanks to the wisdom of its founder and to the benefactions of

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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later in the day. There was, alas! no bedding at the monastery, said Father Ambrose: everything had been carried off by the Communists, to equip a field-hospital which they had established in the mountains to the northward; "What is to be done? But we will find something for you when you return this evening."

We spent the rest of the day scrambling about the rocks and visiting long-abandoned monasteries and hermitages. At St. Nicolas—fast falling into ruin, and where one must tread with circumspection—we found a few paintings remaining in the two chapels and the refectory, as well as an iron chest containing liturgical books and an eikon of the Forerunner; elsewhere, nothing save slowly crumbling masonry and the all-enveloping silence. We paid a fleeting visit to Kalambaka and returned to St. Barlaam a little before sunset laden with cognac and cigarettes. Like the Great Meteoron, this monastery, which crowns the towering cliffs of Drakospelaia, was until quite recent times inaccessible save by net and windlass. It is a sixteenth-century foundation, having been built about 1517 by two brothers from Ioannina—Nektarios and Theophanes—on the site of the fourteenth-century hermitage founded by the solitary from whom the monastery takes its name. In 1950 it was inhabited by six monks. The *Igoumenos*, Father Christopher, told us he had been at the monastery for twenty-one years, and for another twenty years at a convent to the westward of Trikkala. He was seventy-seven—twelve years older than Father Ambrose, an Athenian who was ordained many years ago at Moni Petraki in the shadow of Lykavettos. This was the only one of the monasteries where we came across any novices. Father Bessarion (who came from a village near Larissa and who had seen service with the British army in the Middle East), had been received only five months earlier, as had another young deacon, a native of Chios. There were in addition two simple monks, one of them more than ninety years old.

That night it snowed heavily. Father Bessarion produced a threadbare carpet which, folded double, afforded us a little protection against the bitter cold; and he and a shepherd from Kalambaka, who was living at the monastery, kindled a huge fire which blazed on the open hearth of our cell until morning, while the wind howled along the deserted galleries, the ancient timbers groaned and shivered, and it seemed that an exceptionally heavy squall would send the whole monastery with its domed chapels and its frail scaffolding of cells and domestic buildings spinning off into the abyss. When daylight came we seemed to be sus-

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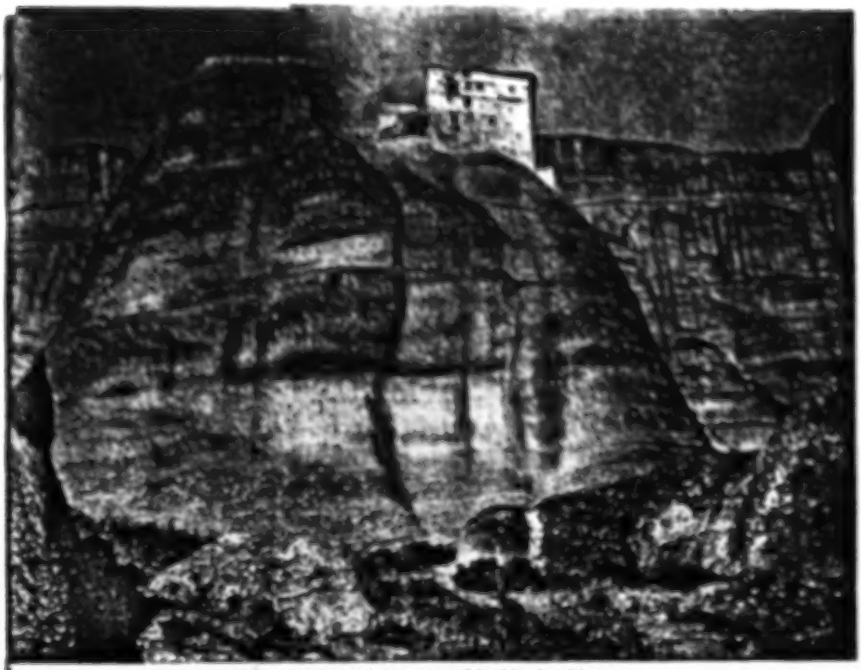

IV Abandoned Monastery of St. Nicolas, Meteora

V St. Barlaam, Meteora

[facing p. 118]

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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crowd around for advice, loans, seed and the like, and begin to turn to their local village government for assistance in bringing further improvements to the community.

Let us now turn to specific cases, and see what has happened in six representative villages during the past ten years.

Villages of the Plains

LOFISCOS

Lofiscos is situated in the plain of Thessaly, about half a mile off the main trunk road between Larissa and Volos. This is a region of hot summers and cold winters, for Thessaly is landlocked, surrounded west, east and south by precipitous mountains, and exposed to cold northern winds coming down from the plateau of western Macedonia in winter. It is the best wheat land of Greece, and wheat is the major – indeed almost the sole – crop raised by the villagers of Lofiscos today.

As the visitor approaches the village over a wandering track, deeply rutted by trucks that traverse the soft earth during the muddy months of winter and spring, Lofiscos looks shabby and ill-kempt. Houses are scattered irregularly; little fresh paint is in evidence. The dominant structure near the center of the village is a half-ruined rectangular stone tower that looks like and in fact once was a small fortress.

Before 1881, the year in which Thessaly was annexed to Greece, this building was inhabited by a Turkish pasha, who owned the entire area which now belongs to the villagers of Lofiscos. The ground floor was his granary and stable; in the upper story the great man lived with his harem. Since 1881 the building has been abandoned and allowed to decay slowly. The scattered huts in which the villagers live also survive from Turkish times in almost every case. The inhabitants are the

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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Hill Villages

KOTTA

Kotta is situated in the far northwestern corner of Greece, about five miles from the Albanian border, and not more than fifteen miles from the point where Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece adjoin. Flowing past the village is a small stream which in due course descends to join the Aliakmon River. The valley slopes are steep, and the villagers possess only 500 stremmata (125 acres) of arable soil. Much of this is thin patches on the hillsides; of good bottom land the community has less than ten acres.

When I visited the village in 1947, the inhabitants were starving. Seemingly innumerable children peeped out from every house, many of them showing bloated bellies beneath motley rags that served as clothing but scarcely covered their nakedness. The village was then in the hands of the guerrillas, who had stationed a detachment of fifteen boys (the eldest was not more than eighteen) in the community. The ordinary speech was Slavic, and at least some of the villagers felt that it would be better for them if their village belonged to Yugoslav Macedonia. Macedonian national feeling may have played some part in this attitude, but probably the major determinant was the knowledge that conditions across the border were not quite so hard as those they faced in Greece.

The people of Kotta were, indeed, living under war conditions. The Greek army had blocked the main road between Florina and Kastoria, which runs not far from the village site, and no vehicles could pass without special permits; men could still get through on foot by taking off across open country, but there was little incentive to do so. Work could not be found down in the plains, and a man from Kotta, with the trace of a Slavic accent in his Greek, was courting arrest or a beating if he

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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Cherasia
[Hill Villages]

city, was almost idle, so that serious unemployment was endemic in Volos, thus effectively blocking the easiest and most immediate escape for the hillsmen of Cherasia. In the Thessalian plain, villages like Lofiscos have not developed their agriculture to a level of intensity that would offer seasonal employment on a significant scale. Hence, for the time being the people of Cherasia are caught in a net scarcely of their own devising. At the same time they are stubbornly and angrily doing little or nothing to help themselves. It is not a hopeful situation, and if the general political climate of Greece should change, another guerrilla band could very likely be recruited from Cherasia without difficulty and at a moment's notice.

KARDAMILI

Kardamili lies on the sea, and can thus be described as a hill village only by looking inland, where high and barren hillsides rise abruptly from the coast, with only a small stream and a miniature delta to explain the location of the community. It is situated on the west coast of the central peninsula of the southern Peloponnese. Just to the south lies the wild and desolate country of Mani, a region where tribal organization and blood feud lasted into the twentieth century.

Kardamili raises a little wheat in the stream delta, but its major crop is olives. The rocky hillsides are covered with trees, skillfully planted in crevices and pockets of soil, many of which have been created artificially by terracing. The villagers reckon that they produce enough wheat to supply the community for about four months in the year; the rest has to be imported with money gained through the sale of olive oil.

Before the war, Kardamili added to its strictly agricultural resources by acting as a commercial center for a number of inland villages. They, too, exported olive oil, together with a few

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The nearest railroad station is 3 kilometers from the village. The area is rather flat, sloping gradually as we progress towards the North East. The whole valley where the village lies is surrounded by small rolling hills that form numerous deep gulleys. Due to the lack of vegetation on those hills erosion has been going on for years and very often the fields are flooded down into the valley. The unceasing wars in this area, starting with the Balkan wars and ending with the First World /6/ War, stripped the hills of all trees and shrubs that could protect the soil and prevent the floods. One finds numerous dry fountain springs at the foot of the hills which were built by the people who passed on long ago. With the disappearance of the vegetation on the hills the water disappeared too. There is a small brook that runs North East of the village which quenches the thirst of the village cattle and the numerous flocks of sheep, and serves as a bathing place for the water buffaloes.

The flat land forms an alluvial valley, which has been formed from the deposition of soil by the continuous erosion of the nearby hills. The average elevation from the sea level is 90 meters. In general the soils of the area are 40% sandy clay red soils and 60% clay pyritic. These soils are made up from the surrounding rock formations. In general the depth of the cultivated soil is not more than 25 centimeters and very compact. The sub-soil is sandy clay and does not conserve the moisture. The fertility of these soils is depleted due to continuous farming for many centuries of the organic material and nitrogen.

The climate is very dry and hot in the summer months with plenty of rain during the winter months and occasionally snow. The seasons of the year follow each other /7/ abruptly and not uniformly. This of course has harmful effects on the growth and germination of the plants and hinders the diversification of farming.

The railroad station close to the village enables the village to get to the big trading city of Salonica. This good location

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The Greeks have a story that when God made the world he put the earth through a sieve and used the soil to make the different countries; but the stones that were left in the sieve he threw over his shoulder, and they became Greece.[1] The land is so mountainous, precipitous and stony that out of the 50,100 square miles that constitute the area of Greece, only 25 per cent are usable as fields, orchards and pastures.[2] Yet on this land, out of a population of 7,335,675, according to 1940 figures, 60 per cent are directly engaged in agriculture, and another 15 per cent cater to the needs of the farmers.[3] This condition, as well as a growing population, is basic to the need for technical change in Greece. Through more than 2,500 years, Greece solved the problem of increasing population on limited land by sending out her people as colonists or immigrants. In the first two decades of this century, emigration to the United States provided the main solution. Early in the 1920s' two things took place which combined to make the population problem acute; the United States passed a law under which a quota was applied to immigrants, which limited drastically the number of Greeks who could thereafter enter the country; and the exchange of populations with Turkey, which increased the population of Greece suddenly by more than a fourth. Since then, the population figures from 1928 to 1940 indicate an annual increase of 1.5 per cent.[4] The traditional ways of farming and the traditional crops cannot support this growing population, even in terms of sheer subsistence. Change must be introduced at the very roots of the economy, striking at the relationship of man to the land and of man to his work, which is a close and meaningful one to the Greeks. How to do this without destroying the meaning of life is the question facing those entrusted with the introduction of change into this culture.

We give here a report of the basic structure, tenets, and attitudes of Greek culture which should be considered in applying change.

Greece has been undergoing induced change for several decades now. Before 1920, the centralization of political and civil affairs effected profound and permeating change in village communities which had been used to self-regulation, and where a prominent farmer spent his entire fortune to build a village school, or a schoolteacher, on hearing of the appearance of the enemy in the vicinity, could, on his own initiative, pass out arms and lead his pupils to battle. After the exchange of populations with Turkey in 1922, the Near East Foundation, helping to rehabilitate the refugees, also undertook to introduce changes in sanitation, child care and the standard of living generally. Changes in the areas of agriculture and health were

[1] A. W. Gomme, 1945, p. 11.
[2] *Report of the FAO Mission for Greece*, 1947, p. 85. (*See* United Nations, FAO).
[3] Ibid. p. 134.
[4] Ibid. p. 162.